proposal for expanding capacity of its existing smelter at Khetri Copper Complex from 31,000 tpa to 1 lakh tpa. For this purpose, the company has commissioned a detailed feasibility study.

Amendment to mines and minerals act, 1957

3424. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating an overhaul of the Mines and Minerals Act, 1957;

(b) whether the Federation of India Mineral Industries, New Delhi, have demanded simplification of the procedure, renewal and transfer of leases with a view to provide greater flexibility to the private mine owners to feed the domestic industry poised for greater growth in not too distant a future; and

(c) if so, what is the reaction of Government in this regard particularly regarding the demand for period of all minerals the mining lease should be granted for 20 years and also an early legislation of amendment of the Act?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV): (a) to (c) The Government is considering amendment of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 taking into account the suggestions received from various State Governments/Union Territory Federation of Mining Associations and the Mining Industry and in the wake of Statement on Industrial Policy, 1991 and the National Mineral Policy, 1993. As per Section (8) of the Mines and Mineral (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 Mining Leases can be granted for a period not exceeding 20 years.

Gold Mines in Bihar

3425. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some gold mines have been found in the State of Bihar in the recent past;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have started mining in these mines; and

(d) if not, by when mining activities are likely to be started in these gold mines of Bihar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) Exploration carried out by Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL) in Porojharna block, Kunderkocha area, Singhbhum District, Bihar have established a possible reserve of 7741 tonnes of gold ore, of which 3223 tonnes of gold with an average grade of 4.19 g/t gold and 4518 tonnes with an average grade of 19.49 g/t gold. The ore bodies are highly erratic in size, shape and grade.

Exploration so far carried out by State Government of Bihar in Sono Block, Karmatiya village, Munger district have indicated low gold values between less than 0.1-1.8 g/t gold. The data obtained so far are not sufficient to establish reserves.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) The exploration data obtained so far are not sufficient to arrive at conclusion regarding economic viability of the deposits.

Application recommended by Karnataka for mining lease

3426. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the State Government of Karnataka had recommended to the Centre for approval, the mining lease application